



"Dips for Every Day"

Transitioning to a Mediterranean-style diet can be made easier by incorporating healthy dips into your routine. These dips serve a dual purpose: not only are they perfect for dipping whole grain toasts, pita, flatbread, or vegetables—a hallmark of Mediterranean snacking—but they also offer versatility as spreads for sandwiches or bases for Mediterranean-style pizzas. Here are a few flavorful dips from our "Dip Trio" at Gigi, along with some bonus caponata ideas, to help you embark on your Mediterranean culinary journey. All the dips below can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days.

Baba Ghanoush

Makes 1 quart

- 2 Italian eggplants (about 3 pounds)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 ½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup tahini
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (add more to taste, if necessary)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon cracked red pepper
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive

To Grill Eggplant: Preheat grill to medium-high. Lightly rub eggplants with olive oil. Place the eggplant on the grill, and cook, turning every 4 to 5 minutes until it is tender, and the skin is charred and crispy on all sides. The eggplant should become very tender.

Transfer the eggplant to a large colander over a bowl. Allow it to sit and drain for a few minutes until fully cooled. Lightly press to extract excess moisture.

To Roast Eggplant: Preheat oven 425 degrees F. Trim the eggplant and cut them in half, then salt it extract excess water, about 30 minutes. Wipe off any excess salt and arrange the eggplant on a parchment lined baking sheet sprayed or rubbed with olive oil. Roast for about 40 minutes or until very tender and cooked through. Let cool, then using a spoon, scoop the flesh into bowl. Gently stir in the remaining ingredients, using a wooden spoon. Don't over mix this as the rustic consistency is what you're aiming for.

Red Lentil Dahl

Though a popular staple in India, it's believed that red lentil dahl has its roots in the Mediterranean region. With its blend of North African warm spices, this dish offers complex flavors. Enjoy it with crusty bread or a flatbread like naan. At Gigi Trattoria, we serve it with our gluten-free sweet potato flatbread. For a delicious, protein-rich addition to any meal, try it over rice or potatoes.

Makes 1 ½ quarts

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 small bell pepper, diced
- 1 medium carrot, peeled and finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tsp ginger minced
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp coriander
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp paprika
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne
- 1 tsp garam masala
- 1 ⅔ cups dry red lentils, rinsed
- 3 ¼ cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup (coconut milk
- ¼ cup coconut cream
- 1 cup diced tomatoes, drained
- salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tbsp lime or lemon juice or to taste
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- Fresh lemon juice to season

Heat oil in a skillet or saucepan over medium heat. Add chopped onions, pepper, and carrot. Cook while stirring frequently until vegetables soften, about 3 to 4 minutes.

Add garlic and ginger, cooking for an additional minute.

Stir in the spices and sauté for a few seconds, then add the red lentils, followed by the vegetable broth. Bring to a simmer, cover, and cook until the lentils are tender and have absorbed most of the liquid, approximately 15 minutes.

Add coconut milk, cream, and strained tomatoes. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the lentils are tender and slightly creamy. If the sauce becomes too thick, add a little more broth.

Season with salt, pepper, and lemon juice to taste.

Eggplant Caponata

This sweet and sour Sicilian classic, caponata, is incredibly versatile. It's delicious when served with crusty bread, makes a great topper for crostini, serves as a flavorful accompaniment to rice dishes, and can even be used as a healthy spread for sandwiches. At Gigi, we feature caponata on our menus year-round. During the fall and winter seasons, we offer a variation by swapping out the eggplant for harvest squash, such as kabocha. For the best flavor experience, serve caponata at room temperature

Makes 1/2 quarts

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 pound eggplant, peeled every other strip and diced
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 teaspoon garlic
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 ½ cups plum tomatoes with juice
- ½ cup quartered green olives
- ¼ cup golden raisins
- 1 ½ tablespoon capers
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano or 2 teaspoons fresh
- 2 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste

Sauté the eggplant, onion, celery, and garlic in the olive oil over medium heat. When the vegetables soften, 3 to 5 minutes, stir in the tomato paste. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute, then add the plum tomatoes, green olives, raisins, capers, and oregano. Cook, simmering, stirring often, until the eggplant is soft, and the mixture is a thick consistency. Stir in the parsley and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Hummus

Hummus is always a crowd favorite! Enjoy it with crusty bread, pita, and flatbread, or vegetable crudites. It's also the perfect flavorful spread for sandwiches and wraps. For a Mediterranean twist, try substituting hummus as the sauce on a Mediterranean pizza. Top it with grilled chicken, black olives, roasted red peppers, feta cheese, and fresh arugula for a delightful flavor combination that's sure to please.

Makes 1 quarts

1 quart chickpeas, drained

1 tablespoons ground cumin

2 tablespoons tahini paste

2 garlic cloves

1/4 teaspoon ground cayenne (more if you like the heat)

1 ½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice

¼ cup olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

In the work bowl of a food processor, blend all ingredients except for olive oil, salt, and pepper. When smooth, with motor running, drizzle in olive oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

For Black Olive Hummus, blend 1/3 cup Kalamata olives into above.